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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2018
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: PA PRIVATELY CONCERNED ABOUT HIZBULLAH PRISONERS
DEAL, WHILE HAMAS CALLS IT A "GREAT ACHIEVEMENT"

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Palestinian Authority (PA) PM Salam Fayyad expressed concern to the Consul General on June 29 regarding the inclusion of Palestinian prisoners in the GOI-Hizbullah prisoner deal. The PA's Prisoners Affairs Minister also expressed concern about the deal, alleging the GOI has stalled on talks with the PA to define prisoner release criteria, while sending a message by dealing with Hizbullah and Hamas that the only way to obtain a significant prisoner release is to kidnap IDF soldiers or withhold their bodies. Hamas leaders lauded the deal as a "great achievement for the Lebanese resistance" and proof that "rights can only be gained by force." End summary.

Fayyad: Hizbullah Gets Prisoners Released,
and Abu Mazen Gets Nothing

¶2. (C) PM Fayyad told the Consul General on June 29 that he is concerned about the inclusion of Palestinian prisoners in the GOI-Hizbullah deal. He said the popular impression will be that President Abbas gets nothing for his requests for prisoner releases at his bi-weekly meetings with Israeli PM Olmert, while Hasan Nasrallah and Hizbullah get not only Lebanese but Palestinian prisoners released in trade for two corpses. He said the GOI should release Palestinian prisoners to Abbas before making deals with Hizbullah and Hamas.

"Public Impression Is Kidnapping IDF
Soldiers Only Way to Get Prisoners Out"

¶3. (C) PA Prisoners Affairs Minister Ashraf al-Ajrami commented to POL FSN June 30 that the GOI seems more interested in negotiating with Hamas and Hizbullah than the PA on prisoner releases. He said the GOI-Hizbullah deal causes the Palestinian to public believe the only way to obtain a significant prisoner release is to kidnap IDF soldiers or withhold their bodies. Al-Ajrami alleged that the GOI has refused to discuss criteria for prisoner releases with the PA, rendering the PA-GOI committees on prisoner releases useless. He said the GOI has thus far been unwilling to discuss release of 350 pre-Oslo prisoners, 54 critically-ill inmates, 111 women and 344 minors incarcerated in Israel (groups prioritized by the PA for release), but it is expected that Hamas will not release captured IDF soldier Gilad Shalit without a substantial release of prisoners in these categories.

Hamas: Hizbullah-GOI Deal Is a
"Victory for the Resistance"

¶4. (U) Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhum told press June 30 that the GOI-Hizbullah deal is a "great achievement for the

Lebanese resistance" and proof that "rights can only be gained by force." Barhum added that the GOI should know that releasing captured soldier Gilad Shalit is conditioned on how the GOI responds to Hamas' offer for a prisoner exchange and "abides by the conditions of that offer." Senior Hamas leader Usama al-Muzayni downplayed indirect talks thus far on Shalit's release and said negotiations will only take place after complete fulfillment of the Gaza ceasefire agreement. He said Hamas has agreed to Egyptian mediation of indirect Hamas-GOI talks, but denied significant progress had been made on a prisoner exchange agreement.

WALLES